Student Factors and Attitude to English Studies in Oluyole Local Government, Ibadan Oyo State

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Abstract
This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between student factors (Academic Ability and Interest) with Attitude to English Studies in Ibadan, Oyo State. Three research questions were answered in the study. The instruments used were Attitude to English Studies (r=0.92), Students' Interest in English Studies (r=0.91) and Students' Academic Ability (r=0.85). Five hundred JSS two students, randomly selected from 10 secondary schools, participated in the study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were used to determine the relationship as well as relative and joint contribution of the variables to students' attitude to English Studies. The findings revealed that there was positive significant relationship between interest and attitude to English but no significant relationship between academic ability and attitude to English Studies. It was therefore recommended that English Studies lessons presentation should be geared towards boosting students' interest and enhancing their academic abilities. The classrooms should be student-centered and both the teachers and parents should try to build self-confidence in students towards developing a positive attitude towards English Studies.

Keywords: English Studies, Interest, Academic Ability, Attitude

Introduction

The English Studies Curriculum designed for the Upper Basic Level of the Nigerian 9-Year Basic Education Programme in Nigeria (Junior Secondary School) is the revised curriculum for primary and junior secondary pupils. The curriculum comprised English Language and Literature. This is opposed to the former curriculum in which English language and Literature were taught as separate subjects at the secondary school level. The essence of this combination, according to Teacher's Guide, 2012, is to decongest the curriculum and integrate English Language and literary skills in students' English language vocabulary. With this combination, it is expected that students' communication competence and reading skills will improve and they will be empowered to use English language effectively after their completion of the JSS level.

English is a second language to many Nigerians and it plays vital roles in almost every official sector. It is the main medium of communication and its usefulness, in all facets of life in Nigeria, is numerous. English is the language used in conducting most or all teaching and learning activities in the education system at the upper level of education. It is the major medium of instruction in schools and a core subject in the curriculum. As a medium of instruction, it is the medium through which teaching and learning take place from upper primary through secondary and tertiary education levels in all subject areas except indigenous and foreign languages. As a core subject in the school curriculum, students are expected to pass it at credit level before they are promoted to higher classes. It is also a pre-requisite for successful admission into higher institutions and a determining factor to a successful education career in every tertiary institution in Nigeria. It is a pivot on which the educational wheel of Nigeria rotates. In fact, any student that hopes to aspire beyond the secondary school level has no alternative to a competent grasp of the English language for a successful educational career. The English Studies Curriculum is organised in themes namely reading, listening and speaking, grammatical accuracy, writing and literature. Each theme is further broken-down into sub-skills. This is aimed at making teaching and learning of each theme gradual and interesting for teachers and pupils (Teachers' Guide, 2012). The curriculum contents are also to enable pupils learn, internalize and use what has been learnt for solving real life problems. While the primary school pupils are exposed only to English language towards developing their language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), the junior secondary school English Studies curriculum is a combination of English language and Literature. This is meant to expose the students to a wide range of English language and literary skills that would enhance their communicative skills. With this curriculum, it is believed that students will not only be competent users of English language but teaching and learning will be entertaining and interesting to them. For effective implementation of this curriculum, learner-centered curriculum as well as active participation of students during lessons through different activities and all-round assessment tools have been suggested (Teachers' Guide,2012). One of the major advantages of this curriculum is to create a positive attitude in students' towards learning English Studies due to the integration of literary skills that would enhance communication skills and students interest lessons.

In spite of the innovative nature of the revised English Studies curriculum, scholars have observed that the junior secondary pupils' performance in English Studies is still very poor. Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2013) link this to the fact that some of these students have not adequately grasped English language skills from primary schools. As a result, possible problems were identified with the students' English Studies performance. Anyaegbu, Aghauche and Nnamani (2016) identify poor reading comprehension skills among junior secondary school students. Ibrahin (2016) discovers poor summary writing, poor reading comprehension, grammatical structure, vocabulary development and low proficiency in oral pronunciation as English language problems among junior secondary school students. Makinde and Tom-Lawyer (2008) mention the use of mother tongue at the junior secondary level. The study attest to the fact that many students come to secondary schools knowing little or no English thereby necessitating the continued use of mother tongue as medium of teaching the subject in some instances.

These identified problems, in the students' English Studies performance which may eventually lead to poor learning outcomes at the junior secondary schools if not effectively handled, could pose as problems at the senior secondary level. Buttressing this assertion, Amuseghan (2007) laments that after several years of learning English language and using it as a medium of

instruction, students' performance and competence in it still remains poor. In fact, students are merely motivated to pass English language rather than master it. This problem has not only affected English studies achievement but has equally robbed on achievement in other subjects in the curriculum being the language through which many of the subjects are studied. This is acknowledged by Olanipekun, Atteh, Zaku and Sarki (2014) who note that the poor performance in other school subjects is traceable to the inability of students to express themselves meaningfully in English or meet the language demand the subjects made on them. Classroom discoveries of students' incompetent use of English language in different subject areas have justified the current study.

Studies have linked the low performance of junior secondary school students in English Studies to several factors such as teachers' factors, students' factors, parental factors, government factors and environmental factors (Onuegbuezie, Bailey and Daley 2000; Akindele and Adegbite, 2005; Verghese, 2007; Rabiu, 2014). However, the significant role of students' personal factors in learning, particularly in English language learning outcomes have been identified by researchers (Fakeye, 2010; Fakeye, 2012; Kpolovie, Joe and Okoto, 2014) as very important.

Student is a very important factor in the process of teaching and learning, and if they are not effectively handled during instructional process, they could adversely affect learning outcomes. Among some student factors that are vital to successful teaching and learning are attitude, intelligence, learning styles, reading habit, self-regulation, family support, gender, interest and age. Studies carried out on students' related factors towards proffering possible solution to students low achievement in English language have been centered on, peers influence, self-regulation and student attitude (as a predicting factor).

However, most of the studies on student factors have mainly centered on students' learning style, environmental factors and attitude as predictor variable (Fakeye, 2012; Adeyemi and Adeyemi, 2014) at the expense of other student factors. In the light of this, this study is centered on these student factors (academic ability and interest) on student attitude to English Studies.

Attitude, the dependent variable in this study, is a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards certain things such as ideas, objects, persons or situations. It is a link to a person's beliefs and values, and promotes or discourages the choice made in all realms of activities, whether academics or informal activities (Abiden, Pour-Mohammedi and Alwari, 2012). Attitudes are both cognitive and affective; that is they are related to thoughts as well as feelings and emotions (Eshghinejal and Gritter, 2006). It involves believes, emotional reactions and behavioural tendencies related the objects of attention. Ryan and Giles (2006) described attitude towards a language as any affective, cognitive or behavioural evaluative reactions towards a language or its speakers. That is, attitude encompasses three components which are cognitive, affective and behavioural. The cognitive component relates to the beliefs or mental disposition towards something (Ryan and Giles, 2006). The affective component is about the feelings and emotions that one has towards the object, while behavioural component relates to the persisting actions or disposition towards the object (Hosseini and Pourmandnia, 2013). According to Roos (1990), a change in any of the three components of attitude could exert pressure on the other two components which could lead to an attitudinal change. For instance, a change in ones' belief towards a language could lead to a change in ones disposition and feelings towards the language.

Atchabe (2002) states that learners with positive attitude, who have experienced success in second language learning, will have their attitude towards second or foreign language reinforced, whereas learners' negative attitude may be strengthened by lack of success. This implies that the outcome or feedback learners receive from undertaking an activity or task influences their attitude towards such activity or task. Learners perceptions and their level of expectation also influence their attitude by helping in building their confidence or demotivating learning. As a result of the effects of such negative attitudes to language learning, the important role of the teacher in helping students change such negative attitude is emphasized by Farani and Fatemi (2014) who noted that the teacher is expected to use his/her classroom instructional expertise to change negative attitude or maintain positive attitude in students towards language learning.

Hence, attitude is very important to this study because it is a strong motivating factor to language learning since positive attitude has been found to predict successful language learning (Fakeye: 2010; Soku, Nkansah and Osafo-Adu, 2011; Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi and Alzwari, 2012; Hosseini, 2013; Imoh, 2013; Ahmed, 2015). However, some factors such as self confidence, language use anxiety, interest, relevance (Zhao, 2002), personality factors, parental factors, social factors learner factors and teacher factors (Atache, 2002) have been found to influence learners' attitude to English language. These factors, according to Atache (2002) can determine the attitude of learners towards learning and acquisition of second language.

Academic Ability, one of the student's variables in this study, is described as a cognitive construct that is vital to academic success (Rosman, Mayer and Gunter, 2015; Reza, Elham and Gholam, 2015). Rosman, Mayer and Gunter (2015) describe it as a learner's mental ability in a subject area that requires learner's self- concept, persistence and achievement motivation in achieving competence in the subject area. This implies that it is not enough to be intelligent but one has to be persistence and be motivated. As one of the students' factors that influence students' achievement in learning generally and English language in particular, studies have viewed academic ability as the general set of mental ability involved in performing a wide range of learning tasks. This mental ability is described as a person's ability to learn and remember information, to recognise concepts and their reaction, and to apply the information to their own behaviour in an adaptive way and this is called intelligent quotient (Akinlana 2013). Based on intelligent Quotient tests, studies have shown that there is positive correlation between academic ability (intelligence) and achievement in second language learning (Teepen, 2004; Fakeye 2010; Selahi and Sadighi, 2012; Rosman, Mayer and Gunter, 2015). These studies have shown that intelligence is a predictor in language learning, particularly in English

language, in the area of reading, vocabulary development and writing but not in oral communication and listening comprehension. What this suggest is that intelligence may play a major role in classroom setting, where students performance in language learning is assessed but plays less role in a social setting where language is mainly used for social communication. Due to the influence of academic ability on second language learning, this study will examine the extent to which academic ability could also influence students' attitude to and achievement in English Studies.

Given the evidence from different studies on relevance of intellectual ability in language learning, which could influence students' approaches to and their eventual success at language learning, and students' achievement in English Studies, it would worth the effort to investigate the influence of students' academic ability on English Studies.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the fact that English Studies have been introduced in the curriculum of JSS to improve on the use of English language, reports on students performance indicate that students still face problem with the subject. Though, studies addressing students' challenges in English Studies are few, yet, efforts towards proffering possible solution to learning outcomes in English Studies have been intervention of different teaching strategies. However, the problems of students in English Studies still persist. This is why it has become imperative to take a look at students' personal factors since they have been identified as very crucial to learning outcomes. The student variables that were looked into in this study were students' academic ability and students' interest. Many studies on these factors have shown that they are strong determinants to students' learning outcomes in second language (English language), Mathematics, Basic science and Technology, Economics and Biology. But to the best knowledge of the researcher, these factors have not been significantly linked to the teaching and learning of English Studies, especially at the JS level, in Oyo State, Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated the extent to which these student factors (academic ability and interest) predicted students learning outcomes in English Studies among junior secondary two students in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered:

1 What is the relationship among student variables (academic ability and interest) to students' attitude to English Studies?
2 What is the composite contribution among student variables (academic ability and interest) to students' attitude to English Studies?
3 What is the relative contribution among student-teacher variables (academic ability and interest) to students' attitude to English studies?

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational research design to determine the relationship between students factors (academic ability and interest) and students attitudes to English Studies. Five hundred Junior Secondary II students and 10 English Studies teacher participated in the study. The study was carried out in Oluyole Local Government Area of Ibadan, Four self-designed instruments were used in the study. Five hundred Junior Secondary II students and 10 English Studies teacher participated in the study. Three self-design instruments were used in the study. The instruments were Students' Attitude to English Studies (r=0.92), Students' Interest in English Studies (r=0.91) and Students' Academic Ability (r=0.85). The study was carried out in Oluyole Local Government Area of Ibadan, Four self-designed instruments were used in the study.

Research Question 1: what is the relationship between students' variables (academic ability and Interest) with Students attitude to English Studies?

Correlation matrix showing the relationship between Student variables (academic ability and interest) on students' attitude to English Studies

	Students' Attitude to English Studies	Students' Interest	Academic Ability
Students' Attitude to English Studies	1		
Students' Interest	.383* .000	1	
Academic Ability	-.032 .469	.006 .897	1
Mean	55.58	57.09	9.62
STD.D	5.425	10.058	3.708

* denotes significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 1 revealed that there was a positive, low significant relationship between students' interest and attitude to English studies (r = 0.383; p<.05). This implies that students' interest was positively related to students' attitude to English studies. Thus, for students to have positive attitude to English studies their interest must be enhanced. There were negative, non-significant relationships between academic ability (r = -0.032; p>.05), and students' attitude to English studies. This implies that academic ability is not related to students' attitude to English studies.

Research Question 2: What is the composite contribution of Students Academic Ability and Students' Interest to Students' Attitude to English Studies?

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis on the composite contribution of student variables (academic ability and interest) to students' attitude to English Studies

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2177.534	1	544.384	21.547	.000
Residual	12506.424	495	25.266		
Total	14683.958	499			
R = 0.385 R Square = 0.148 Adjusted R Square = 0.141 Std. Error of the Estimate = 5.0265					

Table 2: indicated that the composite contribution of student variables (academic ability and interest) to students' attitude to English Studies was significant ($F_{(4,495)}$ = 21.547; adj. R^2 = 0.141; p<0.05). Table 4.4 further revealed a multiple regression coefficient (R = 0.385) and multiple regression adjusted (R^2 = 0.141), this means that 14.1% of the variance of students' attitude to English Studies were accounted for by the joint contribution of the independent variables when taken together. This means that the remaining 85.9% is due to other factors and residuals not included in this model.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of students' Academic Ability and Student Interest on students' Attitude to English Studies?

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Regression showing the relative contribution of student variables (academic ability and interest) to students' attitude to English Studies

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficient**		**Standardized Coefficient**	**Rank**	**T**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta (β)**			
(Constant)	44.871	3.592			12.491	.000
Student Interest	.207	.022	.383	1st	9.206	.000*
Academic Ability	-5.217E-02	.061	-.036	2nd	-.857	.392

Table 3 showed the relative contributions of the independent variable expressed in beta weight to the dependent variables. The relative contribution of student interest (β= 0.383, t = 9.206; p<.05) to students' attitude to English Studies was significant while the relative contribution of academic ability (β= -0.036; t = -0.857;p>.05) to students' attitude to English Studies was not significant

Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study have shown that there was a positive significant relationship between students' interest and attitude to English studies but no positive significant relationship between academic ability and students' attitude to English studies. This shows that students' interest has influence and can determine students' attitude to English Studies while academic ability has no influence on students' attitude to English studies. This is not surprising because interest in learning generally propels positive attitude in learners. The result is in agreement with many studies that have established interest as one of the most motivating factors that influence learners' attitude to learning (Shiefele, 1991; Katz, Assor, Kanat-Maymon and Bereby-Meyer, 2006; Okpolovie, Joe and Okoto' 2014). According to Katz, Assor, Kanat-Maymon and Bereby-Meyer, 2006), interest is that student variable that sustains deep motivation in students when frequent positive environmental feedback is missing in learning. Also, Okpolovie (2014) asserts that students who are interested in learning are bound to have positive attitude to schooling. This implies that students who have developed interest in learning could have positive attitude towards school subjects or tasks because such interest will motivate him/her towards devoting more time to the subject, pay more attention to it and makes him/her preserver over any difficulty the task/subject may pose. In second language learning, the impact of interest on students' attitude to learning English language has been found to be significantly related. However, if a learner does not have the interest and the tendency in acquiring the target language, the learner will possess a negative attitude and will not be motivated and enthusiastic in learning the language (Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi and Alzwari, 2012).

On students' academic ability, what the result suggests is that the students' academic ability, whether high or low, may not predict students' attitude to English Studies. This result could have been a reflection of students' self perception of their performance in English Studies tasks which eventually influences their attitude. This is also in agreement with other studies that that students' successful performance in second language enhances their attitude towards acquiring and learning the language(Oz, Demirezen and Pourfeiz, 2015; Arnold and Foneca 2004). According to Bain, MaCallum, Bell and Sawyer (2010) successful performance in language tasks

can play a motivating role in goal attainment for gifted students. This means that high academic performance in second language tasks could enhance students' attitude in learning the second language. Hence, it is advised that teachers should endeavour to devise ways of developing students' interest in English Studies so that they could develop positive attitude towards it.

Also, the result has showed that there was a significant composite effect of student factors (academic ability and Interest) on student attitude to English Studies. The result showed that 14.1% of the variance in students' attitude to English Studies was accounted for by the independent variables when taken together, while the remaining 85.9%.was due to other factors not considered in the study. The result revealed that the ability of the predictor variables to predict student attitude to English Studies could not have been by chance, rather, they are essential determinants of students' attitude to English Studies. This means that the joint contribution of students' Academic Ability and students Interest was significant and had resulted in students' attitude to English studies. This result agrees with Kpolovie et al (2014) and Waseka, Simatwa and Okwach (2016) who find student and teacher factors significant contributors to students attitude to learning.

Finally, this study has shown that out of the two students' factors (Academic Ability and Interest), only students interest had relative effect on students' attitude to English Studies. The result of this study is in consonance with findings from (Eidswick;2010;Kpolovie,2014) who have found students' interest as an indispensable factor to students' attitude to learning generally and second language learning in particular. The study had also showed that Academic Ability had no significant relative contribution to students' attitude to English Studies. The findings of this study are contrary to results from other studies that have found academic ability an important factor to students' attitude to second language learning (Arnold and Fonseca, 2004; Luo, Lee, Wong and Foo, 2004; Fakeye, 2010). However, the reason for this result could be as a result of other factors not included in this study which could have discouraged students from putting in more effort in their English Studies lessons.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is apparent that only students' interest' out of the two independent variables (Academic Ability and Interest) is capable of influencing students' attitude to English Studies. Therefore, English Studies teachers should devise styles of teaching that would arouse and sustain students' interest in English Studies through the use of instructional activities such as language games, drama display and songs.

The English Studies teachers should also take cognizance of the two variables during presentation of lessons towards enhancing students' attitude in English Studies. This could be achieved by devising an eclectic teaching style that could create positive attitude in students towards English Studies, delivery lesson contents that are within students' ability level and creating conducive learning environment for every student.

Finally, for an enhanced academic ability, teachers of English Studies and parents should try and build self-confidence in students as it could boost their interest and develop a positive attitude in them towards English Studies.

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